

Loss of U-2 Over Cuba Remains Mystery After

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By John G. Norris
 Staff Reporter

Nearly a week after he failed to return from a reconnaissance flight over Cuba, how Maj. Rudolf Anderson, USAF, met his fate remains a mystery.

All that the U. S. Government has disclosed is that he is missing in action. And Cuban authorities have been silent except for telling the United Nations that Maj. Anderson's body is being shipped home.

The reason for the mystery seems to stem from the fact—still not acknowledged by the Pentagon—that Anderson was a U-2 pilot.

Tough News Curb

In the climate now prevailing at the Defense Department, where tough new restrictions have been placed on release of news, that fact alone is enough to account for not talking. U-2 operations still are touchy and top secret. Moreover the Air Force may not know the full story of what happened over Cuba.

In other circumstances, Cu-

ban Premier Fidel Castro might be boasting of the destruction of such an intruder over his air space, but it is almost certain that it was a Soviet crew firing Russian ground-to-air missiles that brought down the high-flying Strategic Air Command pilot.

Apparently Anderson was downed before or about the time President Kennedy and Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev were approaching an agreement on withdrawal of the offensive Russian missiles from Cuba. The Pentagon announced him missing Saturday, but didn't say when. That would be reason enough for Moscow to keep mum and to see to it that Castro followed suit.

There is no question now that Soviet—or American—ground-to-air guided missiles can shoot down a plane flying even higher than the top altitude of a U-2— if it comes within the "slant" range of the

weapon. Russian Guideline anti-aircraft missiles have an estimated altitude of 100,000 feet, while the U-2 has a ceiling of 70,000 to 80,000 feet.

Surprise Hinted

Guidelines have a range of about 25 miles, and normally a U-2 can photograph its objectives from outside its reach. Pentagon sources say Soviet missiles in Cuba probably are newer, improved versions of the Guideline, and they may have surprised Anderson.

Moreover, U. S. reconnaissance pilots were not flying normal missions. They had to get evidence of the dire new threat to the United States—some ten ballistic missile bases and additional bomber bases guarded by at least 22 SAM (surface-to-air missile) bases, concentrated in a small area of the island. Anderson may have bravely flown straight over the missile sites to get his pictures.

Moreover, the U-2 is a lightly built, aerodynamically not-too-stable plane which can be rocked by a near-miss, possibly causing a flame-out that could bring it down. Some feel this is what happened to U-2 pilot Francis Gary Powers over Russia, whose full story has never been told publicly.

There is an enigma within the mystery of the Anderson incident. Why would Russia risk nuclear war by shooting him down, once President Kennedy had met the challenge of the Cuban bases by

blockading the island? One act made while Moscow was can only speculate. Possibly, still testing U. S. determination. We do not know just when Anderson crashed and authorized by the Kremlin. Or it could have been much earlier perhaps it was an authorized er than Saturday.

Nearly a Week

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